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Question Time: 'Merry Christmas' or 'Happy Holidays?'

Which seasonal greeting do you prefer?

By Rob Burgess

Tribune night editor

[**Editor's note:** To participate in future queries, keep an eye on our Twitter and Facebook accounts.]

The phrase “Happy Holidays” is centuries old and is Old English in origin. It has been commonly used in this country for more than 100 years. It was further popularized by the 1942 Irving Berlin song “Happy Holidays” from the film “Holiday Inn.” Lately, though, this seasonal phrase has come under fire from those who feel it usurps the religious undertones of “Merry Christmas.” So, during this week between Christmas and New Year’s Day, we wanted to know: “If someone says ‘Happy Holidays’ to you (instead of ‘Merry Christmas,’ ‘Happy New Year,’ etc.), how does it make you feel and why?” Once again, we’re tweaking the Question Time format to accommodate the spectrum of your varied answers. (The vast majority of readers reported being fine with the “Happy Holidays.”)

OK

“Happy that they took time out of their day to wish me blessings of any kind.” — **Elisabeth Fletcher**

“Not everyone is Christian. Saying ‘Happy Holidays’ covers the season not just the Christian holiday. I personally am much more annoyed by the people who post rude things that disparage other people’s views. I don’t care if you are Christian, Buddhist, Muslim, Jewish, atheist, etc. I just want you to have a wonderful holiday season.” — **Nichole Dieter**

“I honestly don’t care. They’re all polite statements. There’s no reason to have a hissy fit about. I’m just glad someone said to have a ‘Happy’ or ‘Merry’ anything.” — **Anthony Rogers**

“I’m happy when someone says something polite, period. No need to feign offense as a non-religious person when someone wishes me ‘Merry Christmas.’ People need to stop looking for reasons to be offended. Take it as a kind word and move on.” — **Corinne Osinski-Carey**

Sort of OK

“Mixed feelings. Someone might say ‘Happy Holidays’ instead of ‘Merry Christmas’ because they may not know which religion you practice. So,

instead of starting a fight or drama, they play the safety card. I myself wish EVERYONE a 'MERRY CHRISTMAS' because that's the reason for the season. Like Elisabeth Fletcher said, at least they took the time to wish us a 'Happy Holidays.' It is quite a blessing. I have worked in retail at gas stations and grocery stores on holidays, and I always wish a 'Merry Christmas,' 'Happy Thanksgiving,' etc. All that matters is the thought behind the saying." — **Cameron New**

"It's polite, but [I'd] rather hear 'Merry Christmas.'" — **Benjamin Brown**

"Call it whatever you wish. Just don't be offended by what I choose to call it." — **Carol Mund**

"I just correct them and say 'Merry Christmas' back." — **Betty Woodman**

Not OK at all

"I do not like 'Happy Holidays!' It is [Christ's] birthday! The whole reason we celebrate! Merry CHRISTmas!" — **Rhonda Huskins Thomas**

"It's like a kick in the gut. I always answer with 'Merry Christmas.'" — **Penny McGill**

“As a Christian I find it offensive and highly disrespectful for my Lord.” —

Misty Henry

“Makes me angry. Why would they even think of taking Christ’s name out of it. That’s what it’s all about: Christ being born.” — **Betty Hoskins**

Our answers

“I don’t notice it. I’ve never noticed it. ‘Happy Holidays’ has been around since I was in my single-digit years or perhaps earlier. I don’t think I heard it as an issue until the last decade or so as people — fueled by talk radio and talk TV — look for reasons to be upset.” — **Pedro Velazco**

“People have different beliefs so I respect that, but I do however respond with my own ‘Merry Christmas!’” — **Arlene Long**

“As long as people are positive, I don’t care how they refer to Christmas. I am kind of tired of the political correctness B.S., but as long as they’re wishing me a good day, who cares how they say it.” — **Mike Fletcher**

“First, understand if a service industry worker says ‘Happy Holidays’ to you, it probably wasn’t their idea. So, even if you feel strongly about this issue, it’s not going to do anything but make you feel better and them worse if you

dump all your negativity out on them. Second, take the time to appreciate any kind word no matter the phrasing. Third, I hope everyone realizes there is no mention in the Gospels of Dec. 25 as being the exact date of Jesus' birth. Like the exchanging of gifts, the Christmas tree and the Yule log, the placement of the holiday on the calendar is borrowed from the Pagans and their solstice festivals. (Incidentally, did you know the Puritans, among others, banned Christmas in the New England colonies calling it an abomination and idolatry? Talk about a 'War on Christmas!') Fourth, there is, in fact, more than one holiday in the final few weeks of the year. Look, I celebrate Christmas and if I'm certain the person I'm interacting with does too, I'll throw out a, 'Merry Christmas.' But since I'm not sure of your religious or cultural traditions, dear reader, I wish you a hardy: 'Happy Holidays!'" - **Rob Burgess**

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